DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 038 797 EC 005 460

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TITLE	A Color Sound Film to Illustrate the Use of New Materials and Techniques in Teaching Emotionally and/or Neurologically Handicapped Minors. Final Report.
INSTITUTION	California State Dept. of Education, Sacramento.
SPONS AGENCY	Office of Education (DHEW), Washington, D.C. Bureau of Education for the Handicapped.
BUREAU NO	BR-7-0986
PUB DATE	Dec 69
GRANT	OEG-0-8-070986-1814(032)
NOTE	22p.
EDRS PRICE	EDRS Price MF-$0.25 HC-$1.20
DESCRIPTORS	Color Presentation, *Emotionally Disturbed, *Exceptional Child Education, Instructional Films, *Learning Disabilities, Neurologically Handicapped, *Protocol Materials, Sound Films, Special Classes, Teacher Education, *Teaching Methods

ABSTRACT

A color sound film was developed to illustrate new materials and techniques of working with emotionally and/or neurologically handicapped students in special classes. Designed to stimulate discussion and self study, the film utilized actual students and their teachers, who had been using the new approaches as part of their usual instructional program. Restructuring provided lead-ins and narration to promote viewer analysis. The film was shown to trial groups and used in university and inservice programs. Over half of the document consists of an appended film guide to be used before viewing the film. The guide explains the purpose of the film, presents guidelines to use with it, and makes specific suggestions for discussion. (JD)

ED038797

OE/BEH
PA-40
EC

FINAL REPORT

Project No. 7-0986
Grant No. OEG-0-8-070986-1814(032)

A COLOR SOUND FILM TO ILLUSTRATE THE USE OF NEW MATERIALS AND TECHNIQUES IN TEACHING EMOTIONALLY AND/OR NEUROLOGICALLY HANDICAPPED MINORS

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September 1969

Department of Health, Education, and Welfare

U.S. Office of Education
Bureau of Education for the Handicapped

AC005460E

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The research reported herein was performed pursuant to a grant with the Bureau of Education for the Handicapped, U.S. Office of Education, Department of Health, Education, and Welfare. Contractors undertaking such projects under government sponsorship are encouraged to express freely their professional judgment in the conduct of the project. Points of view or opinions stated do not, therefore, necessarily represent official position of the Bureau of Education for the Handicapped.

Department of Health, Education, and Welfare

U. S. Office of Education
Bureau of Education for the Handicapped

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
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INTRODUCTION

The demonstration project was a product of the need to increase the communication avenues for the increasing numbers of professionals and para-professionals serving exceptional children and the more recent concepts and approaches for educating the exceptional child. An appropriate film might enhance the communication of state agency consultants, serve teacher-training institutions, provide an inservice training aid, and serve to assist allied areas or groups in an orientation toward the schools educational efforts for exceptional children.

The objective of the film was to illustrate new materials and techniques of working with emotionally and/or neurologically handicapped pupils in special classes, in small groups, individually, and in specialized settings. It was an attempt to show the potential for educational planning in a variety of settings, focusing more on needs of pupils than on categorical labels. Part of the rationale for this approach is reflected below:

1. New developments in the field of special education, especially the area of the emotionally handicapped and the neurologically handicapped, have generated many theoretical models and clinical studies which often claim clearly superior results. Yet school teachers and administrators are confused by this welter of data and repeatedly request information and examples, devoid of partisanship, which has meaning for their frames of reference.

2. The frames of reference for school personnel are the operational public school programs. New materials, methods, and theories are of value only to the extent they can show relevance to the teacher's problems and resources at the local level.

3. The teacher's careful, practical observation of every child should be a prerequisite to a decision to use any given approach or approaches. The factor of balance also enters in here - balance among methodology, equipment, evaluation, and the learner.

4. To help establish balancing elements, attention will be given to: (1) verbal and non-verbal communication, (2) perceptual development, (3) conceptual development, (4) motor development, (5) behavioral development, (6) basic skill development, (7) teaching strategies, (8) elements of evaluation, (9) auxiliary services, (10) parental involvement, and (11) instructional devices. These are all elements which seem to be most in need to clarification and assistance in "bridging the gap" between isolated or limited clinical studies and operational implementation.

5. The film will attempt to graphically illustrate the need for inservice training as an integral part of total program planning and hopefully stimulate self-direction.

6. The film would be instructional, but not an end in itself: it will serve the larger task of stimulating thoughtful discussion and continued self-study.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE FILM DEMONSTRATION PROJECT

A considerable amount of time and effort were devoted to the planning for the film. Without involving in this report all the steps, consultation and ground work, the essential plan became that of filming effective teachers actually utilizing a method, technique, or material with their own class or group of pupils. A minimum of staging was involved; rather, teachers were located who had been employing the approaches desired to be filmed as an integral part of their usual instructional program for exceptional children.

A heavy investment was made in filming. Much more film was taken than might ordinarily be the case, in order to obtain a broad range of topics and an in-depth view of the particular approach. The result was a thorough coverage of most of the areas suggested by the consultants and project personnel.

Work prints of the filming were organized and a group comprised of the project directors and consultants met to evaluate the material and select those segments to be used for the final film format. Following fourteen hours of viewing and discussing the filmed material, a serious problem became apparent and upon clarification resulted in a need to re-evaluate the project at this point.

The problem, as defined by the review team, was in the variety of interpretations possible from the sequences as filmed. The camera often saw too much and occasionally did not pick out all that might have been necessary to define an event. Thus, the range of possible meanings from the visual content became a major obstacle for the narration to adequately counteract.

While the teachers and students did not appear unduly affected by the filming, the content was less fully controllable than is the usual procedure using professional actors and a prepared script. The spontaneity, honesty, and representativeness of the actual classroom were obtained. However, enough extraneous, distracting, or undesirable material was recorded to detract from the central idea in the sequence. Thus, while the filmed material did portray the idea intended, it also caught several other aspects to which the viewer's attention seemed to be drawn. While as an observer in the classroom such incidents or observations are more easily understood in relationship to the total environment or event, the limited view of the camera together with the intensity of attention given the projected scene created a problem in making this film.

While the teachers and students did all that might be expected of them, while the teaching was of high caliber, while the camera crew and technical aspects were fully adequate, it became difficult to edit the material into a concise, accurate statement of the technique, material or approach for presentation in a relatively short film. A script and professional actors would have helped, but they could not represent the real classroom that was wanted in this project.

REVISION OF THE PROJECT GOALS

At this point, a decision was made that perhaps an emphasis on telling (showing) what might be a good technique or approach would be less forceful than originally planned. Since the key issue was the interpretations made by the viewer, the central concept was revised to take advantage of this aspect of the film. This was one stated purpose of the film. Thus, the emphasis on demonstrating a good technique or approach was lessened by letting the visual aspect impart this information without further attention being given through the lead-ins and narration. The film was restructured to lead the viewer to critically analyze the sequence and formulate a means by which the viewer could evaluate the technique or approach for use in his own classroom. A revised work print was felt to accomplish this goal and the final film is the result of the additional editing and refinements made after initial field testing.

RESULTS IN THE USE OF THE FILM AS A DEMONSTRATION PROJECT

"Partners in Learning" was shown to several groups of special educators and psychologists without a specific introduction. The reaction was strong, and both favorable and negative. It was concluded that its use needed careful structuring and that the film might be misused. On the basis that the film might not be used as intended, the project directors met with the film producer and several minor but significant changes were made. Greater attention was given to its intended use by inserting captions breaking the film more specifically into segments. A plan to actually cut the film into separate parts was discussed and finally rejected due to increased logistical problems. Additional effort was made to have the film guide emphasize the nature of the film as well as be of useful background for the film user.

The final edition of the film titled, "Partners in Learning" has been used in several college training programs, with the faculty of the state diagnostic schools for neurologically handicapped children, in a number of workshops and seminars during the summer, as part of several ESEA, TITLE VI in-service training projects, and by school district staff for in-service training of teachers. The results thus far have been positive. The discussion generated by the film have had depth and high interest, frequently going beyond the time allocation. The film does communicate with the classroom teacher, as evidenced by the intensity of their interest and ease of relating the content into their everyday experiences.

Copies of the film are available from the Instructional Materials Center-Special Education of the University of Southern California and from the California State Department of Education, Division of Special Education. Copies may be purchased from the producer.

The appendix is a copy of the film guide which contains additional pertinent information.

Information on the continued use of this film as a demonstration media can be obtained from the project director.

APPENDIX A

PARTNERS IN LEARNING

FILM GUIDE

Prepared for

DIVISION OF SPECIAL EDUCATION

CALIFORNIA STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

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SPECIAL NOTICE

THIS FILM HAS BEEN PREPARED FOR A SPECIAL PURPOSE. BE SURE TO READ THE FILM GUIDE CAREFULLY BEFORE VIEWING OR USING THIS FILM.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This film was made possible in part by a U.S. Office of Education, Bureau of Education for the Handicapped, grant No. OEG-0-8-070986-1814(032) under P.L. 89-164, Title III, Section 302, as amended by P.L. 89-105.

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INTRODUCTION

California's program for educationally handicapped minors has been established on the basis that handicapped pupils often show a greater range and variety of learning and behavioral problems than is implied by categorical definitions of an etiological nature. Pupils with dissimilar handicaps frequently respond to a similar teaching technique. On the other hand, no one method has been shown to be effective for all pupils in the same category of handicap.

Much has been written advancing the concepts of individualizing instruction, of prescriptive teaching, and of programmed instruction. The effectiveness of these approaches depend in a large degree upon the careful and continuous evaluation of pupil growth and progress. For the handicapped pupil, an even more critical aspect is the adaptations made to enhance the learning potential of the pupil through utilization of the more intact and functional modalities for learning.

There is no lack of ideas, techniques, or materials for teaching. Effectiveness in teaching the handicapped requires much more. The direction or method is not always obvious, and indeed, often repeated trial efforts are required to evaluate pupil responses to alternate approaches or methods. A teacher must be able to assess and evaluate the pupil as a learner. She must then plan and implement a strategy for teaching. The strategy must be evaluated and improved, revised or discarded. To accomplish this, the teacher needs much more than ideas, techniques or materials.

One of the skills an effective teacher must have is the ability to really question very critically his teaching strategies. This skill should be an attitude or habit. The habit of questioning the value of each assignment. Of determining how much it contributes to the teaching goals. Even of questioning whether the goals themselves are clearly defined. This film has been produced to help teachers, through discussion, become more effective in analyzing and developing their own teaching strategies.

PURPOSE

Once a teacher completes his formal training, daily classroom teaching does not afford much opportunity to observe and analyze teaching strategies. Those fortunate enough to have access to closed-circuit television have unique opportunities to observe teaching, often their own. Programs designed to assist teachers in analysis of their teaching have found that the teachers themselves have the ability and resources to see relevant strengths and problems. Teachers often are their own best critics, and are able to positively improve their teaching when afforded the opportunity to observe and reflect on classroom procedures and contingencies without the immediate necessity of the decisions needed when actively instructing.

Most films on curriculum or methodology have a philosophy or procedure to promote. Such films are usually carefully planned and developed. Scripts are written to cover the sequences, development, and critical phases. Rehearsals insure the best possible portrayal of the subject. Viewers get an idea and basic information for the use of such materials or approaches in a classroom.

"Partners in Learning" is not a film to promote a specific methodology or philosophy. Certainly teaching ideas may be conveyed in the film, but this is only incidental to the purpose of the film. "Partners in Learning" is a film intended to serve as a common starting point for discussions on teaching strategies. Such discussions, it is felt, will enable each teacher to become more thoughtful of her own teaching. The importance of this film rests with the quality of the discussions it generates. By itself, the film has limited value.

The film is divided into segments. Each segment is an unrehearsed portrayal of a teacher and pupils involved in the normal activities of their program. Some background information is provided by a narrator. Following each segment are questions which were raised by a group of teachers and project personnel after viewing the film segments. It is intended that each of these segments be viewed separately and then be immediately followed by a discussion of the presentation. These discussions should be open ended. There is seldom a correct or right response, but rather there should be a broad exploration of the ideas generated by the film. The purpose of such discussion is to provide each participant with a variety of points of view that will help enlarge the understanding and ability to see relevant meaning in the many activities seen in these classrooms.

Discussions can often become a lecture with participation. If teachers are to become skilled at questioning their teaching strategies, the film discussion should be highly oriented toward the development of questions, not to the resolution of questions. The discussion leader must be aware of the critical role to be played in this regard. In some respects the discussions should have an essence of inquiry technique. The goal, however, is the generation of a broad range of questions and concerns, enabling all members of the group to experience and share a variety of possible viewpoints as contained in the questions themselves.

The major purpose of "Partners in Learning" is to serve as a common reference vehicle for the stimulation of questions. The questions form the essential content of discussions which should be directed to the raising of still further questions. Attempting to provide many answers usually inhibits the questioning attitude and thus defeats the purpose of this film.

IMPORTANT GUIDELINES TO USE WITH THIS FILM

Considerable field testing has preceded the writing of this guide. The following guidelines have been repeatedly found to be of importance:

Pre-Planning

1. If discussion leaders have not previously seen the film, it should be previewed once, and twice, if possible.

2. The audience should be primarily teachers or students in teacher training.

3. It is not advisable to mix pupil personnel staff, psychologists or administrators with teachers. If desired to include such persons, plan separate sessions.

4. Keep audience small. Discussion groups should be kept under 15-20 persons.

5. Arrange seating so that discussions can be held immediately after viewing a film segment without changing seating.

6. Determine how sessions are to be scheduled.

   a. The entire film and discussion can be completed in one session, but allow approximately four hours if entire film is to be used in one session.

   b. The introduction and first segment can be shown, with remainder to be shown as opportunity occurs. Time is thus more easily arranged for particular situations. At least three sessions are advisable when each session is not more than an hour.

   c. Segments may be repeated several times when interest and discussions sustain participation. Repeated reviewing of a segment has been highly beneficial when time interval is relatively short (within two weeks).

7. DO NOT ATTEMPT TO SHOW THE ENTIRE FILM IN ONE CONTINUOUS VIEWING.

Showing the Segments

1. Keep sound level up. Pay particular attention to sound quality and keep sound level at the high or loud end of the comfort range. Advise audience of the mix between the sounds of a scene and the narrative, and forewarn to give the narration attention. The visual picture does attract attention while much information is being related by the narration.

2. Caution the group against trying to make notes on usable techniques, but rather to note questions or concerns.

3. Be prepared to stop film at the end of segments and proceed directly into discussions.

4. A large screen for viewing is not essential. The film can be used in a limited area with smaller picture.

Conducting the Discussions

1. Allow the group to open with their questions or comments. Direct the discussion to the asking of questions.

2. Avoid trying to answer questions, but rather raise further questions.

3. Guard against group members becoming "authority figures" by their answering of questions in the early phases of the discussion.

4. At appropriate points, it may be necessary to remind the group of such points as:

   a. The episodes are truly unrehearsed and are not a staged presentation.

   b. The episodes are selected from what was the real daily program and not the result of something "special" done by the teachers.

   c. The film is made up of bits and pieces. Each is as it happened, but there is no attempt to show a complete sequence or the development of a particular method.

   d. The film does not show the planning, amount of previous teaching, or the "bad" moments, but does expect the viewer to raise questions about these matters.

   e. These segments are not necessarily the best ideas, techniques, or approaches, but were chosen for their value in stimulating questions on the strategies utilized. They should not be reviewed as representative of what an E. H. program "should be."

   f. The segments are each somewhat special or unique to the particular situation. They are taken from a large diversified E.H. program in one district, but are not intended to be representative of the whole program. This is NOT a film on the California E.H. program.

g. The filming was done in the spring semester. Much previous teaching went into developing the program to the point shown in the film. It does honestly represent the stage of achievement at the time. Some allowance has to be made, of course, for the presence of a camera crew in these classrooms.

5. Do not allow the ideas presented in the film to become compared to particular theories or methods, but rather stimulate the type of questions needed to permit a teacher to do such an analysis on her own.

6. There is no Right or Wrong answer to many of the questions. This is primarily because there is insufficient information given to arrive at so conclusive an answer. Guide discussions toward developing the kinds of questions that need to be asked and answered before such judgments can be made.

7. When interest in specific areas arise, make notes to provide an opportunity for discussion at a later time. Do not get knowingly side tracked as it is difficult to regain the questioning attitude once answers and solutions become a goal in the minds of the group.

8. Don't rush going to the next segment. There is not that much on the film to disregard the value of extensive inquiry development of each segment.

9. If questions or discussions lag, it may be advisable to repeat the segment before going on to another. Many factors will need to be evaluated, and this is a responsibility of the group leader.

SPECIFIC SUGGESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

Introduction

This segment is of general information and frequently is stimulating to some members of the group. It is not intended to be discussed. The discussion leader will need to be alert, however, to questions raised that are based on the introductory segment. For repeated viewing, the introduction should be deleted.

A Team Approach to Remedial Reading

This very active segment shows two teachers and two learning disability groups working together in a team approach. This somewhat unique

grouping can occur in large intermediate or secondary schools where a large population permits such selective grouping. Particular attention needs to be given the variety of activities, including the quiet, well controlled scenes that are sometimes overlooked in the attention given more active scenes. Also to be noted are the variety of ways competition is stimulated.

Questions raised by the film:

- How could you use these techniques in science, math, or social studies?
- What could you do if there were only one teacher in the classroom?
- Are there some children who could be harmed by this approach?
- Is it a question of controlling the stimulation--of channelling it in some way?
- Can this activity oriented approach be used in conjunction with more individualized learning programs?

Questions frequently raised in groups:

- How is the grouping done? Is the basis reading level, grade placement, ability level, etc.? (The film indicates learning rate)
- What is meant by learning rate?
- Does the learning rate change? How are plateaus and spurts in learning rates handled?
- Doesn't the recording of progress show up the poor student as a failure?
- Is reading the only thing they teach?
- Do these pupils have other problems and what is done about them?
- Are these really "E.H." pupils? Are they really that bad or have they really made that much progress?
- Isn't so much "individual" competition a risky approach? (Was it all "individual"?)
- What other ways can activities be conducted when only one teacher is present?
- Is it possible to be frank and realistic about a pupil's progress (problems)?
- Do such pupils always work well together?

- What happens to a pupil who is antagonistic or poorly motivated?

- How can these pupils manage to attend regular classes the rest of the day? Don't they have problems in other classes?

- Can they read well enough to do regular school assignments in other subjects?

- Do these teachers co-ordinate their help with pupils' reading needs in other courses?

REMINDER - THESE QUESTIONS SHOULD LEAD TO THE POSING OF APPROPRIATE OTHER QUESTIONS IN ORDER TO MAKE MORE MEANINGFUL JUDGMENTS. ANSWERS OR JUDGMENTS SHOULD NOT BE A MAJOR PART OF THE DISCUSSION. THE GOAL IS TO BRING OUT THE RELEVANT QUESTIONS THAT CAN BE OPERATIONALLY STATED THUS PROVIDING THE TEACHER WITH A METHOD FOR MAKING A MORE THOROUGH ANALYSIS OF HER OWN TEACHING STRATEGIES.

Art Activities to Integrate Learning

This teacher uses her art background to develop an approach for working with three pupils with different problems. The film shows her work with two pupils, raises some questions, and then shows the third pupil, with a final group of questions. If time permits, a discussion should be held after the narrator following the first two pupils, Loreto and Terry. Then the third pupil, Oliver, can be viewed. There is no break in the film at this point, so it will be necessary to stop the film without the usual intermission notice.

In the beginning, Loreto is handling a chess piece, but is talking about a chess board made of wood. It is recommended that the group be informed of this so they can follow the scene more accurately.

Questions raised by the film (Loreto and Terry)

- Is the difference in Mrs. Kermit's manner of questioning a conscious part of her teaching?

- Should the language activity with Loreto have been more structured in some way?

- Could you suggest follow-up activities?

- For a child like Terry who is reluctant to use his imagination, did you feel the activity was too restricting?

- Why did she use just neutral color?

- Instead of limiting Terry to the paper cutouts, what if she had given him a set of paints and told him "OK, have a ball"?

- Could you see an underlying rationale in the activities with Terry?

Questions frequently raised in groups

- Isn't Loreto's problem a bi-lingual language problem or is it something more?

- Why doesn't he remember things?

- Does he have concept formation problems?

- Could Loreto have some form of aphasia?

- Wouldn't it help to have more visual language, such as words, labels, or charts?

- How can he possibly function in regular classes?

- Would he be more likely to learn in a small group of peers?

- What is the effect of his visual and auditory handicaps? Are they being given adequate attention?

- Doesn't Terry have lots of creativity?

- How does the teacher really know he doesn't look at the objects she has him feel?

- How much effect has his visual problem had?

- Couldn't his anxiety be more related to a visual handicap than a psychological problem?

- Does he have motor development deficiencies which hamper his visual understanding?

- Would motor training help him more?

Questions raised by the film (Oliver)

- Does the self-portrait activity serve a valid purpose?

- Was it a mistake to begin with the child's own body?

- Would a more objective frame of reference - a doll or a model be better?

- What about Oliver's recurring mistakes?

- Should Mrs. Kermit have dealt with his substitutions or forgetting in a different way?

- Should she have taken measures to help him avoid making errors in the first place?

- What activities would you try next?

Questions frequently raised by groups

- Why did the person question the validity of painting the self portrait?

- Isn't this better done in a vertical plane by pinning on a wall or board?

- Is the teacher talking with Oliver or is he painting alone?

- How much time does this consume in relationship to other activities that might be used?

- Why does he make circles with both hands?

- Is the circle acceptable as he draws it? Isn't the distortion bad?

- Would a teacher be effective without getting down to eye to eye level for this kind of activity?

- Would Oliver benefit more from a motor training program or physical education approach?

- Is something to take home always a positive experience for a pupil?

- How do you handle sidedness when facing a pupil?

Using Discussion to Influence Behavior

This segment shows a special day class in an activity often conducted by teachers. It is an area in which most teachers have had very little chance to reflect on the effects of their role in such discussions. Theoretical issues often are raised and the group leader must be alert to keep the focus on basic concepts of the group dynamics.

Questions raised by the film

- At what point do you think the discussion may have been most useful?

- Do you think any of this will help change behavior on the playground?

- Is a certain amount of superficial talk necessary as a prelude to the more significant statements that emerge?

- Should a teacher try to direct the discussion to a greater extent?

- Do you think the school made a mistake in placing only one girl in the class of boys?

- What about her role in the discussion and Mr. Margiotta's attempt to include her?

- Shouldn't schools and districts provide teachers with the advice and support of consultants trained in psychology?

Questions frequently raised in groups

- When does a teacher find time for individual conferences?

- Is the solution the pupil's or the teacher's? Will a teacher's solution work as well as a pupil derived solution?

- How can the teacher handle the projective material that a pupil brings out?

- Should a teacher attempt to apply psychological techniques in discussions with a pupil?

- Doesn't the pupil sense the teacher's anxiety in this session? (filming more likely the source of teacher's anxiety)

- Why was the girl in the group?

- Is part of the girl's problem her seeming low level of functioning in comparison with some of the boys in the class?

- Shouldn't there be some better standards for such a group discussion?

- Didn't the freedom give opportunity for more pertinent feelings to be expressed?

- Why wasn't some more attention paid to show-off or bravado behavior on the part of one boy?

- Was their expression of group cohesion realistic in this situation?

- How do teachers get more consultation help?